

Service Occupations

Cleaning, Buildings, and Grounds Service Occupations

Janitors and Cleaners and Institutional Cleaning Supervisors

(O*NET 61008, 67002, and 67005)

Significant Points

- Plentiful job openings should arise primarily from the need to replace those who leave this very large occupation each year; limited training requirements, low pay, and numerous part-time and temporary jobs should contribute to these replacement needs.
- Businesses providing janitorial and cleaning services on a contract basis are expected to be one of the fastest growing employers of these workers.

Nature of the Work

Janitors and cleaners—also called building custodians, executive housekeepers, or maids—keep office buildings, hospitals, stores, apartment houses, hotels, and other types of buildings clean and in good condition. Some only do cleaning, while others have a wide range of duties. They may fix leaky faucets, empty trashcans, do painting and carpentry, replenish bathroom supplies, mow lawns, and see that heating and air-conditioning equipment works properly. On a typical day, janitors may wet- or dry-mop floors, clean bathrooms, vacuum carpets, dust furniture, make minor repairs, and exterminate insects and rodents. In hospitals, where they are mostly known as maids or housekeepers, they may also wash bed frames, brush mattresses, make beds, and disinfect and sterilize equipment and supplies using germicides and sterilizing equipment. In hotels, aside from cleaning and maintaining the premises, they may deliver ironing boards, cribs, and rollaway beds to guests' rooms.

Janitors and cleaners use various equipment, tools, and cleaning materials. For one job, they may need a mop and bucket; for another, an electric polishing machine and a special cleaning solution. Improved building materials, chemical cleaners, and power equipment have made many tasks easier and less time-consuming, but janitors must learn proper use of equipment and cleaners to avoid harming floors, fixtures, and themselves.

Cleaning supervisors coordinate, schedule, and supervise the activities of janitors and cleaners. They assign tasks and inspect building areas to see that work has been done properly, issue supplies and equipment, inventory stocks to ensure an adequate amount of supplies are present, screen and hire job applicants, and recommend promotions, transfers, or dismissals. They also train new and experienced employees. Supervisors may prepare reports concerning room occupancy, hours worked, and department expenses. Some also perform cleaning duties.

Working Conditions

Because most office buildings are cleaned while they are empty, many cleaners work evening hours. Some, however, such as school and hospital custodians, work in the daytime. When there is a need for 24-hour maintenance, janitors may be assigned to shifts. Most full-time janitors, cleaners, and cleaning supervisors work about 40 hours a week. Part-time cleaners usually work in the evenings and on weekends.



Janitors and cleaners use a variety of cleaning materials.

Janitors and cleaners and institutional cleaning supervisors in large office and residential buildings often work in teams. These teams consist of workers who specialize in vacuuming, trash pickup, and restroom cleaning, among other things. Supervisors conduct inspections to ensure the building is cleaned properly and the team is functioning efficiently.

Janitors and cleaners usually work inside heated, well-lighted buildings. However, they sometimes work outdoors sweeping walkways, mowing lawns, or shoveling snow. Working with machines can be noisy, and some tasks, such as cleaning bathrooms and trash rooms, can be dirty and unpleasant. Janitors may suffer cuts, bruises, and burns from machines, handtools, and chemicals. They spend most of their time on their feet, sometimes lifting or pushing heavy furniture or equipment. Many tasks, such as dusting or sweeping, require constant bending, stooping, and stretching. As a result, janitors may also suffer back injuries and sprains.

Employment

Janitors and cleaners and institutional cleaning supervisors held nearly 3.3 million jobs in 1998. Less than 5 percent were self employed.

Janitors and cleaners work in nearly every type of establishment and held about 97 percent of all jobs. About 23 percent worked for firms supplying building maintenance services on a contract basis; 16 percent in educational institutions; and 14 percent in hotels. Other employers included hospitals, restaurants, religious institutions, manufacturing firms, government agencies, and operators of apartment buildings, office buildings, and other types of real estate.

Institutional cleaning supervisors held about 87,000 jobs. About 37 percent were employed in hotels; 23 percent in firms supplying building maintenance services on a contract basis; 12 percent in hospitals; and 12 percent in nursing and personal care facilities. Other employers included educational institutions, residential care establishments, and amusement and recreation facilities.

Although cleaning jobs can be found in all cities and towns, most are located in highly populated areas where there are many office buildings, schools, apartment houses, and hospitals.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

No special education is required for most janitorial or cleaning jobs, but beginners should know simple arithmetic and be able to follow instructions. High school shop courses are helpful for jobs involving repair work.

Most janitors and cleaners learn their skills on the job. Usually, beginners work with an experienced cleaner, doing routine cleaning. As they gain more experience, they are assigned more complicated tasks.

In some cities, programs run by unions, government agencies, or employers teach janitorial skills. Students learn how to clean buildings thoroughly and efficiently, how to select and safely use various cleansing agents, and how to operate and maintain machines, such as wet and dry vacuums, buffers, and polishers. Students learn to plan their work, to follow safety and health regulations, to interact positively with people in the buildings they clean, and to work without supervision. Instruction in minor electrical, plumbing, and other repairs may also be given. Those who come in contact with the public should have good communication skills. Employers usually look for dependable, hard-working individuals who are in good health, follow directions well, and get along with other people.

Janitors and cleaners usually find work by answering newspaper advertisements, applying directly to organizations where they would like to work, contacting local labor unions, or contacting State employment service offices.

Advancement opportunities for janitorial workers are usually limited in organizations where they are the only maintenance worker. Where there is a large maintenance staff, however, janitors can be promoted to supervisor and to area supervisor or manager. A high school diploma improves the chances for advancement. Some janitors set up their own maintenance business.

Supervisors usually move up through the ranks. In many establishments, they are required to take some in-service training to improve their housekeeping techniques and procedures, and to enhance their supervisory skills.

A small number of cleaning supervisors and managers are members of the International Executive Housekeepers Association (IEHA). IEHA offers two kinds of certification programs to cleaning supervisors and managers—Certified Executive Housekeeper (CEH) and Registered Executive Housekeeper (REH). The CEH designation is offered to those with a high school education, while the REH designation is offered to those who have a 4-year college degree. Both designations are earned by attending courses and passing exams, and must be renewed every 2 years to ensure that workers keep abreast of new cleaning methods. Those with the REH designation usually oversee the cleaning services of hotels, hospitals, casinos, and other large institutions that rely on well-trained experts for their cleaning needs.

Job Outlook

Job openings should be plentiful for janitors and cleaners primarily because of the need to replace those who leave this very large occupation each year. Limited formal education and training requirements,

low pay, and numerous part-time and temporary jobs should contribute to these replacement needs.

Many job opportunities will stem from job growth in addition to the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Employment of janitors and cleaners and institutional cleaning supervisors is expected to grow about as fast as average for all occupations through the year 2008. To clean the increasing number of office complexes, apartment houses, schools, factories, hospitals, and other buildings, more workers will be assigned to teams with more efficient cleaning equipment and supplies. As many firms reduce costs by hiring independent contractors, businesses providing janitorial and cleaning services on a contract basis are expected to be one of the faster growing employers of these workers.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of janitors and cleaners, including maids and housekeeping cleaners, were \$15,340 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$12,560 and \$19,110. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$11,620 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$25,060. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of janitors and cleaners, including maids and housekeeping cleaners, in 1997 are shown below:

Federal Government	\$27,900
Hospitals	16,800
Hotels and motels	15,400
Nursing and personal care facilities	15,200
Services to buildings	13,900

Median annual earnings of institutional cleaning supervisors were \$19,600 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$15,580 and \$24,850. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$13,150 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$31,930. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of institutional cleaning supervisors in 1997 are shown below:

Hospitals	\$22,400
Nursing and personal care facilities	20,200
Services to buildings	18,500
Hotels and motels	17,200

Related Occupations

Workers who specialize in one of the many job functions of janitors and cleaners include refuse collectors, floor waxers, street sweepers, window cleaners, gardeners, boiler tenders, pest controllers, and general maintenance repairers. Private household workers also have job duties similar to janitors and cleaners.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about janitorial jobs may be obtained from State employment service offices.

For information on certification in executive housekeeping, contact:
 International Executive Housekeepers Association, Inc., 1001 Eastwind Dr., Suite 301, Westerville, OH 43081-3361.
 Internet: <http://www.ieha.org>

Landscaping, Groundskeeping, Nursery, Greenhouse, and Lawn Service Occupations

(O*NET 15017A, 15031, 15032, 72002D, 72002E, 79005, 79030B, 79033, 79036, and 79041)

Significant Points

- There are seldom minimum educational requirements for entry-level jobs and most workers learn through short-term on-the-job training.